

THE ANGEL OF PEACE

of God and to gather the fruit of souls. Every one is bound to be keen for his own art; this is the art that God has given us ; we must, therefore, exercise it and not bury our talent, for then we should be worthy of a great rebuke, but employ it at every time and in every place and on every creature. For God is no respecter of places or of creatures, but accepts holy and true desires. I came for nought else save to eat and taste souls, and draw them from the hands of the devils. For this I would lay down my life, if I had a thousand, and for this reason I shall go and stay according as the Holy Spirit shall direct."*

The murmuring continued while she was at Montepulciano and the Rocca. Madonna Rabe Tolomei, misliking that her son, Fra Matteo, should be lingering with Catherine among the hereditary enemies of her house, wrote that her daughter Francesca was very ill, and that Matteo must come instantly to her, on pain of her curse.² Others declared that Catherine and Raimondo were plotting with the Salimbeni against the State, and so wrought upon the Defenders that they despatched Tommaso di Guelfaccio with a letter ordering them to return to Siena, where there was some more important peace to be effected by her means. In her answer, a long and eloquent letter, Catherine rebukes their self-love and cowardly fear that leads them to mistrust those who are labouring indefatigably for their welfare and the peace of the State, at the same time craving pardon for her presumption in thus addressing them, and promising to obey their summons as soon as she can.⁸ To Salvi di Pietro, a goldsmith in Siena who had weight with the government, she wrote that, in spite of the murmurs and suspicions that had arisen against her and Fra Raimondo, God had bidden her stay until her work was accomplished, and that she rejoiced in being thus persecuted. " Whether the demon likes it or not, I shall continue to exercise my life in the honour of God and the salvation of souls, for the entire world and particularly for my native city. The citizens of Siena do a most shameful thing in

¹ Letter 121 (201).

^a Letter 120 (344).

⁸ Letter 123 (202).